

Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. In this episode, Lorrie and JC tackle Book Five, Chapter Thirty: Grawp.

Lorrie: Grawp. Chaos reigns at Hogwarts after Fred and George's departure. Hagrid takes Harry and Hermione into the Forbidden Forest and asks for a favor: look after his half-brother Grawp, a sixteen-foot-tall giant. Ron wins the Quidditch Cup for Gryffindor! Here we are at the Hogwarts of post-Fred and George, and Umbridge cannot get rid of the swamp that they have left in one of the corridors.

JC: I really like the way that Fred and George's exit feels like a turning point. It's that wonderful moment where the other kids see, 'Oh, you can fight back? This worked.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: 'And now we're going to do it, too.' I love the fact that now the teachers are helping. They're just like, 'Oh, yeah, yeah. Leave Umbridge and Filch to try to clean it up,' and all the kids in the school are using Weasley products to create havoc, like that time-honored tradition of throwing a wrench in the works and non-cooperation.

Lorrie: Yeah. Sabotage.

JC: I like all the little things that keep happening, but I think my favorite one is that the students take things to make themselves sick in Umbridge's class; she walks in the door and everyone pukes everywhere. She can't punish everyone, which is so interesting to me. She tries, and it's just not working and she gives up finally, and I feel like that's a really relevant lesson for us today and where we are in the world.

Lorrie: Yes.

JC: If everyone just stops cooperating with a system, there's not much they can do. My example that I want to give for this: the Texas state legislature passed a lot of awful laws in the last session. One of the ones that is having a big impact on classrooms (in addition to some of the other harmful ones) is that they basically banned what we call SEL (social emotional learning), which is just crazy. I don't really know how the right decided that social emotional learning was a terrible thing. I know it just happened and it baffled me the entire time, because literally, this is just how to be a nice person, how to learn how to manage your emotions. It's that kind of stuff. It's stuff that kids desperately needed, especially after the pandemic; they've banned this because I guess it's a bad thing if children know how to manage their emotions and be nice to other people. The school districts... It was left up to them to decide how they were going to implement all these things, and most school districts in the state decided that what this law meant was

that they needed to get parent permission for kids to get any kind of care at school. I got this letter -- other parents I know get a letter from the school that says you have to opt-in by filling out a form online that says "Yes, my child can get counseling at school. Yes, if my child is injured at school, the nurse can give them health care," all of these things. Let's think about the worst-case scenario I can imagine: a kid is in severe emotional distress and goes to the counselor's office. Now, the counselor has to check if the kid is on the list, and if the kid is not on the list because their parent never filled out the form, they just send them back to class, I guess. That's where we're at. I was talking to a teacher about this the other day and she was in tears, talking about the fact that in her school district the way they interpreted this was you cannot ask kids how they're doing. You can't say, "Are you having a good day? Are you okay?" You can't do it. You're not allowed to even ask about their well-being, and she was crying and said, "This is not what I got into teaching for. They told us it's a firing offense." I could not help myself from saying, "Well, what if everybody did it? Would they fire all of you?" When I read this part of the chapter, it struck me: if we all just say "No, we're not going to cooperate, we're going to care about children whether their parents gave us permission to care about them or not," what would they do? Would they just fire everyone? No, they can't. It's impossible. They can't even fill up the classrooms with teachers. This feeling of "We're just going to pass all these rules to try to control you..." If everyone just says "No, thank you," then what can they do?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It was a relief to read this and to see it working in this story in this way.

Lorrie: Yeah. That really stood out to me that Filch is outnumbered and the Inquisitorial Squad are outnumbered...

JC: Yep.

Lorrie: And that's something that helps to remember we're in the majority.

JC: I like that the students all claim to have "Umbridge-itis" when they're asked what's wrong with them. They're naming her here.

Lorrie: What are you going to do about it?

JC: What are you going to do? Oh, my God. Another one of my things that I love is that Peeves has just taken it to heart and is doing things that are really clearly putting everyone in danger, but at the same time everyone's stepping back and saying, "All right, Peeves, go for it." But I think my favorite one is him following Umbridge around and then blowing raspberries every time she speaks. That's a chef's kiss kind of moment for me. "Oh, yeah, she can't get a word out," and no one can control Peeves. There's no edict that she can post on the wall.

Lorrie: Well, it definitely reminded me of when hate preachers go around to do harassment with megaphones, and then bands of people with trombones and tubas make these blating noises every time they start.

JC: That's amazing.

Lorrie: Yeah. That kind of mockery... You can't do much against it. Not all of us have trombones and tubas lying around, but you can give out kazoos.

JC: Yeah. That's true, too. Oh, that's a good idea. It's very instructive. I think that's what I'm thinking about. At the time of this recording, we're starting a school year where all these new, really hateful policies are being put into play and teachers don't like it. They're being told that they're going to be fired if they don't implement this. Principals, people -- no one who's involved in education wants to do any of this. It's all just bullshit and the students don't like it, but reading this was almost like this instructive "Here's how you fight back in small ways," and I was like, 'This is so timely.' For me personally, it just felt like an incredibly timely chapter to read. Oh, and the teachers egging Peeves on... That's another thing. Oh, God, I love McGonagall.

Lorrie: That's the iconic McGonagall line where she says, "It unscrews the other way." I like that this tells us exactly what the function of a poltergeist is. Poltergeists are spirits of unrest that live where adolescent children are; when children are suppressed, especially in developing sexuality when there are uneasy things going on under the surface for children, that's when poltergeists are really active. This really is everybody saying, "Peeves, it's your moment," but then I got shivers because then we have an example of it going too far when we find out that Montague "had still not recovered from his sojourn in the toilet. He remained confused and disorientated and his parents were to be observed one Tuesday morning striding up the front drive, looking extremely angry." That gives me chills. Nobody ever contacts the parents from Hogwarts.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: This was serious enough. Can you imagine getting the call that your kid somehow nearly died and "we don't actually know what's wrong with him or if he's ever going to recover"? That degree of terror is so chilling to me. We have Hermione persisting and worrying about this, holding that place open in the story while everybody else shrugs and says he was asking for it.

JC: Yeah. That's all true, but then I think about the fact that it's only Slytherin parents that have the privilege to do that. I think about the fact that Hermione and other students were Petrified and they didn't know if they would ever recover, and Hermione's parents didn't have the opportunity to do that, right? They couldn't have found the school even if they wanted to... It's unclear what they knew and what they didn't know, but there's a privilege there that wizarding world parents have that the other parents who are

Muggles don't. That stood out to me, too. I was like, "Of course, Montague's parents could come, but could Hermione's parents come? No." That felt a little uneven to me.

Lorrie: What I appreciated about this was the chill that it gave me as a reader (because of course, Montague really had been abusing power), but then to think about it from the point of view of the parent reminded me of Dumbledore in his office controlling Umbridge when she was shaking Marietta. It doesn't matter if the kid is a little tiny tyrant or not; it's a kid. You don't put them in harm's way like that. If they're doing something this destructive, they can't be reached and changed unless you actually keep them safe and address their needs first. But yeah, I just could not imagine being his parents. There's also the feeling, the terror, when you're called in as a parent because your kid has done something truly creepy. That's not a good parent moment. Of course, we have no idea what his parents would have thought of his work in the Inquisitorial Squad.

JC: It's also interesting to me that Hermione suggests to Ron and Harry that they should... They know that Fred and George shoved him into the disappearing closet -- apparently, no one else knows that -- and when Hermione suggests, "Well, maybe we should tell them what we know," Harry and Ron are just dismissive of it. Hermione is right, but also there's nothing good that will happen to Harry and Ron and Hermione if they tell that they knew this, so I can see also why Harry and Ron are like, "No." It's interesting, too, that Umbridge has established this punishment that is so awful (or this system of injustice or whatever). It's very clear to the Gryffindors that they're not going to get fair treatment here...

Lorrie: No.

JC: So there's no reason to cooperate with the administration.

Lorrie: No.

JC: Which is the way that the Slytherins have probably felt for years, but that idea of 'what's the point in going and cooperating? Even if it would help someone, we're not going to get fair treatment.' When you create an environment in which kids know that even doing the right thing is going to bring bad shit down on them... This is why we shouldn't treat kids this way at all, but hey...

Lorrie: Also, I like that Hermione is introducing the concept of limits. If we are rebelling against the current order, what is the internal code that we're choosing and adhering to? She's suggesting that this is something that should still be on the table, and I'm glad for that because I guess the difference is that she sounds like an adult/near-adult and Ron and Harry sound like children ("I don't care. I'm happy with how it turned out.") That's not an age thing, because people of every age still will claim the privilege of not having to look at the big picture and just be happy for small, petty triumphs that may actually not be eventually any sort of benefit to their lives.

JC: True, true, but it is very much human nature.

Lorrie: I'm glad Hermione said something. We see later, especially in the seventh volume, that the boys and the series very much take up Hermione's point of view and that's what it's pushing toward, but it's not an easy or reflexive concern to have. It's much more tempting to not think of that big picture.

JC: It's also hard to see the big picture at this point, right?

Lorrie: Oh, my God. Ugh...

JC: They don't know where any of this is going.

Lorrie: Speaking of blaming things on the twins... When Harry realizes that his being silent is going to get Ron into trouble with Molly Weasley, that's when he realizes it's time to come clean about where the twins got their startup money.

JC: I do love that moment because he finally confesses it to them, but it's funny, too, because Ron's first thought is, "Great, I'm going to get the blame for this." I have this vision... I don't come from a large family, so I don't have a sense of whether this is real or not, but that idea that the blame gets passed down and that it's either the oldest's or the youngest's fault, right? Ron's like, "Great. It's going to be my fault and my mom's going to be mad at me, and I'm going to be the one that gets yelled at and punished," so when Harry confesses that these are the winnings, Ron's first bit of relief is, "Oh, she's going to be mad at you and not me."

Lorrie: 'Hooray!' It was a good move from Harry.

JC: Yeah, it was time for him to tell them.

Lorrie: Yeah. What's he going to do, pretend that things aren't as bad as they are? It's too late; they have the shop. Then Harry has such a bad conscience about keeping secrets from Ron and Hermione about what he saw in Snape's worst memory that he awkwardly tries to divert their attention by saying that Sirius wants Harry to get more Occlumency lessons, and then he regrets his life choices bitterly because Hermione keeps...

JC: Hermione's like, "Yeah, that."

Lorrie: ...banging on this, and Harry is not in a position to explain why this cannot happen and it's not only up to him.

JC: Right, true.

Lorrie: This is so brutal: when he needs to get Ron and Hermione off-topic, the thing he says to Ron when Ron reveals that Harry is still dreaming about the door in the Department of Mysteries... Ron has told Hermione that in his sleep, Harry has been

saying, "Just a bit farther," and Harry knows he has to divert Ron and Hermione from that, so he says, "I dreamed I was watching you lot play Quidditch. I was trying to get you to stretch out a bit farther to grab the Quaffle." That is vicious -- Ow! -- and it works, too. That immediately slashes at Ron's greatest insecurity of the moment, and this repeats what Snape did in the previous chapter when he smashed Harry's potion sample. If you want to divert people, if you want to throw them off, you find their buttons and press them. Harry enjoyed this: "Harry felt a kind of vindictive pleasure..." That I found unforgettable, and they're all just really on edge. Peeves is juggling burning torches over their heads... They can't hear themselves think; everybody's nerves are just wrecked.

JC: Right. No one's learning anything at this point. It's amazing that the O.W.L.s are weeks away, and the school's descended into chaos. There's no learning happening.

Lorrie: But they are still worried about the O.W.L.s.

JC: Yeah, because you have to be.

Lorrie: They're obsessively scared.

JC: 'That's out of your control.' It's like the AP exam is coming, and whether you're prepared for it or not -- whether your teacher has gone off the deep end or not, whether you even have a teacher or not -- it's coming either way.

Lorrie: The College Board monopoly lives on with or without your petty daily tribulations.

JC: It seems interesting, yeah, that the O.W.L.s are at this point completely separate. They're not under the purview of the government somehow, even though Hogwarts is, which is another thing that is happening in our country right now. There's a lot of states that are restricting what can be taught, but yet the AP exams still require these things to be taught. If you go back to the 1990s, there were places in the United States where the only time in science that you would learn about evolution in some school systems would be if you were in AP Bio because it was in the AP curriculum, and the state could not forbid you from being prepared for that test.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: The same thing's happening with AP Environmental Science right now in a lot of places. Anyway...

Lorrie: Well, AP African American History...

JC: Oh, that's another one, yeah.

Lorrie: ...is being contested in really vicious ways, and all of AP U.S. History and the internal debates within those departments, even though it's separate from the government and separate from any individual university. That can get pretty bloody. Oof... Meanwhile, Voldemort is showing Harry really deep into the Department of Mysteries. He's showing him row number 97 in that room full of spheres. Giant arrows... "Look, Harry!" and Harry's conscious mind is fighting this. With or without his will, his mind is waking himself up. He feels guilty in his sleep at wanting so badly to follow Voldemort and take a look, and he wakes up. That's a really interesting way that human minds work. In contrast, Harry is eaten up by curiosity about that room that Voldemort's showing him and he has zero curiosity about whatever present Sirius gave him at the end of winter break. None whatsoever. That's Occluding. He's Occluding... To think about that, to follow that, would put Sirius in danger, according to Harry's fears; he has blocked it from his mind, even though he hasn't blocked anything about whatever Voldemort's trying to show him. Just like all the other kids, his exam anxiety is disrupting his sleep: "His overwrought brain presented him most nights with stupid dreams about the exams." That made me laugh so much, thinking Voldemort is sneaking into Harry's brain and he has to sit through these tedious nightmares about the O.W.L.s. I just started getting a headcanon of Voldemort (who is much, much smarter than Harry) looking at the things that Harry is worried about, and did he ever just think, 'Oh, for God's sake, here. Just cheat. I'll give you the answers. How can you not know that? I'll do it!'

JC: It's also interesting to me at this point that Harry doesn't completely want to block Voldemort out because he's so curious.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: He's allowing Voldemort to come into his head, into his dreams, and that's really putting yourself in a vulnerable position. The fact that that doesn't bother him more is really interesting to me.

Lorrie: They weren't able. Dumbledore and Snape were not able to explain to him that the way you do that, the way you protect your mind from this kind of invasion, is by thinking of the people you want to protect. It's not that Harry is bad at Occlumency -- he is naturally doing it -- he just didn't get the message because Voldemort was monitoring every lesson, so he doesn't know how. It has to be something that is of greater emotional urgency to you than the curiosity to know something that is very undoubtedly about you.

JC: Yeah, no, all of that makes sense. I think my point was just that he doesn't seem to want to...

Lorrie: Nope.

JC: And the fact that Voldemort can come into his head any time he wants doesn't seem like it's properly terrifying Harry at this point...

Lorrie: No, it's not.

JC: And that's fascinating. 'Okay. Really? All right.' He's no longer worried about that somehow.

Lorrie: Yeah. I also want to say sorry; I didn't think that you had missed that point. I was reiterating this point for the podcast because it's one that is so bewildering, and if you haven't been tracking and rereading, it's not always easy to know how Dumbledore and Snape could have left that glaring loophole. Don't they realize that anybody who's having these visions (that are very much about them) would be curious? Yeah, no, they did realize; they just couldn't do anything about it. They are worried. Oh, gosh, then Cho Chang walks across the courtyard and she's not looking at Harry; Harry's not looking at her. I just thought that is the most valid reason ever for a teenager to say, 'I just have a lot going on right now. I just don't have the energy to focus on the relationship.' Oh, awkward... Oh, and then when Hermione says, "I think Ron might do better without Fred and George around," that's a really uncomfortable twist on how students do better potions when Snape is ignoring them. I do hate when siblings ridicule each other; this is not harmless. People will laugh and say, "Oh, come on, you know how siblings are." That doesn't mean that it's okay.

JC: Right. Fred and George really did torment Ron quite a bit.

Lorrie: Yeah, they did.

JC: It completely makes sense that Ron would have incredible performance anxiety in front of those two in particular. Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah. Even if they weren't much more gifted than Ron (which is obviously true), the fact that they're older and there's two of them... This is so not fair. There's no way Ron is ever going to come out on top in a conflict with those two. Oh, and ouch... Lee Jordan being so lonely.

JC: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorrie: That was a pang.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: He's never been without them.

JC: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, Fred and George, we don't really know a lot about their... We only see them through the eyes of Harry, through the eyes of the slightly younger kids, but they seem like they were pretty popular.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: They had a big group of friends, everybody knew who they were...

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: A lot of people are probably feeling their absence that we're not seeing.

Lorrie: It's really nice that they left with deliberate instructions for people to continue to feel connected. They left as elders saying, "We got you. Keep coming... Now, you have help from us on the outside," and that was a super responsible thing to do. They were taking care of the kids, but poor Lee. How boring school must be... Lee Jordan's not all that interested in the Quidditch game, and we don't get to watch it anyway because Hagrid sneaks in unnoticed (while flattening a whole bunch of human students) to try to whisper to Harry and Hermione that he needs them to come with him.

JC: Was there not a more subtle way to do this? They look over at Umbridge, and Umbridge and all the Inquisitorial people don't see all this happening. That feels a little bit like a stretch to me. 'Oh, come on.'

Lorrie: Sneak, sneak, sneak.

JC: Couldn't he have written them a note? I don't know.

Lorrie: Yeah. There he goes, and he takes them off with him. He can't tell them what they're going to do, what they're going to help him with, but he's armed and when Hermione notices that, he says, "Yeah. Well, now the centaurs are angry, so I have to be armed." This is very applicable: currently, the U.S. military has been deployed to contain our own citizens in Washington, D.C. and they are armed. The whole reason that the centaurs are angry is because the Ministry interfered and Dumbledore had to get a new Divination teacher, so the unrest in the Forbidden Forest is another result of Ministry interference; it has disrupted the politics of the Forest as well. Now, Hagrid is striding into the Forest (where he has always been comfortable but armed and wary of the centaurs) and explaining to Hermione and Harry that if Hagrid hadn't stepped in, he figures that... He came upon half the herd stomping on Firenze ritualistically (according to their legal codes) and that if Hagrid hadn't interfered, they would have kicked Firenze to death. That was what they were in the process of doing, and the point that Hagrid is trying to get across is, "Ugh, that's why there's trouble. Of course, I had to step in." As a reader, the point that I get is, 'Oh, Firenze knew the risks.' None of that would have been a surprise. He knew that's what he was taking on when he made his choice. Meanwhile, Harry and Hermione are staring at Hagrid. "Wait, you stopped half the herd single-handedly?" and he's, like, "Yeah, why?" Okay...

JC: And then in the meantime, he's being beaten up by the giant that they're going to go...

Lorrie: Something.

JC: Okay, whatever that is, it's worse than half a herd of centaurs.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: Okay.

Lorrie: Okay, and then Harry knows what it means when they've gone into the dark heart of the forest and absolutely nothing is approaching them; from the end of the TriWizard Tournament, he knows that means nothing good.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Lorrie: "Aren't we supposed to be in mortal peril by now? Why is there silence around us? Uh-oh."

JC: It's a long walk through the forest, too. It goes on forever.

Lorrie: Oh, my God, yes, and Hagrid explains that he's making changes like this and asking them to help because he knows he's about to be fired. He would have already left, but he has something that he has to protect that's been keeping him here, and this is a conversation that I've heard around me quite a lot: people who are considering, 'Should I leave the U.S. and start a career elsewhere in another country? But I can't because there's somebody in the U.S. that can't leave and I'm going to stay to protect them' or 'I have a dependent.' This is his concern; later in the series, we're going to see Dumbledore and Harry doing that, too; when they foresee that they're going to no longer be around, they take some steps to put their affairs in order, just like Hagrid is doing now. It's pretty responsible of him.

JC: It's also very telling to me that Hagrid says that Umbridge has just been waiting to jump on a chance, a reason, to fire him, and I thought it surprising to me that she couldn't just fire him. She writes all these crazy rules that govern what students and teachers can and can't do; couldn't she have just written one that says, "By order of the High Inquisitor, only fully human teachers are allowed to teach?" Why didn't she go that route? I thought, 'Maybe that just says something about the world I live in more than about the world of this book.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But I'm just like, 'Why didn't she just make up something and fire him?' Because that seems logical.

Lorrie: Because who's going to stop her, right? She owns the Supreme Court. Oops, that's not Umbridge. That's us.

JC: Exactly. Exactly.

Lorrie: Yeah. This is definitely one of those plot points by which we measure that the current U.S. regime is worse off than Umbridge and Hogwarts. Meanwhile, Hagrid doing the best he can to take care of somebody (which obviously is not very good) is very much the situation of when there's no support for a caregiver. Also, the person he is protecting is a refugee, and Hagrid's aim is forced assimilation for purposes of survival. It's not suited to this person, but being a refugee necessitates it without any support. Oh, it's been weighing on him. He's not getting any thanks from Grawp. Oh, God...

JC: And the story he tells, too: how he found Grawp and brought him back against his will, and that Madame Maxime knew and then kind of noped out the trip at some point and was, like, "You're on your own here;" how he got Grawp all the way back to the Forbidden Forest and Harry and Hermione asked, "How did you get him back here unseen?" It's a long journey from where he found him all the way back.

Lorrie: Well, if you think about migrants who walk here from Central America, crossing more than one national border, it's dangerous; when they cross the southern U.S. border, it's not exactly a warm welcome. I don't know. How did that happen?

JC: So yeah, it's really interesting, too, that at the beginning of this particular volume Hagrid was missing for quite a while, right?

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: It's nice to know what he was doing. He was very slowly taking this trip and bringing his half-brother, who is also a giant who does not want to come.

Lorrie: But much larger.

JC: Yeah. Much larger and having him in the forest, but then kept him basically tied up in the forest. That part of it, too, is kind of wild. "Well, he can get his own food." Do deer just wander by? He's tied up. There were some things in here that I thought, 'Okay, this doesn't make complete sense to me from a world-building perspective, but all right, I guess.' Yeah.

Lorrie: But Hagrid's making it up as he goes along...

JC: For sure.

Lorrie: And anybody with advice for him just makes him angry. A situation that I am familiar with from being a parent: if parents say, "Well, why don't you just do it this way? That's what always works for my kid..." I've done that to other parents, too, and the parent who's in the middle of trying to wrangle a meltdown kid is not going to be grateful for the advice.

JC: Ah, for sure.

Lorrie: So yeah, this is the point at which Hagrid explains to the kids who Grawp is: he's a half-brother who's a full giant and doesn't have the cognitive ability that Hagrid has as a half-human. The bullying that Grawp was suffering (that Hagrid had to save him from) is a result of colonization and displacement because giants were not meant to be in such close quarters. They've been attacking and killing each other because they weren't meant to be crammed into wherever they've escaped to, but there's nowhere else for a giant to go. It's certainly not that Hagrid could find a settlement of other giants to bring Grawp to, but we get an example of that kind of settlement with the centaurs when they run into the centaurs and the centaurs confront Hagrid, which is what we gather from the different names of the centaurs, which are very deliberately chosen from different ethnicities, I think. You have Ronan, which is a native name, that's a centaur from these forests. But then you get Bane, also English, Firenze -- okay, that's not an English name -- and Magorian. Okay, where are these centaurs coming from? Is this centaur land known to be part of an official treaty with human wizards that they're allowed in this part of the Forbidden Forest? Is that why you get these different ethnicities living together, and is this why the centaurs are so touchy about this being their forest? This is about land rights and displacement; this is more disruption that is a result of Ministry interference, and it's resulting in these little eruptions of personal conflict with Hagrid grumping at the centaurs and them grumping right back at him. From that point of view, I can really understand: if I were a centaur, "Dude, this is the only place we can live. What did you just bring into the forest? That thing is huge and not very bright, even dumber than a wizard." Oh, boy...

JC: It is interesting, though, that under a totalitarian regime, groups that ought to band together will tend to just snipe at each other, because that's the only power you maybe feel like you have left. If you can't fight back against the suppressive government power, then you get mad at other people who are really no better off than you are or maybe worse off, but that is such a human tendency.

Lorrie: It's accessible to fight against the others who are also struggling, but also the limited resources make it inevitable. There's really only so much forest, and this guy Grawp, if he were not tethered, would have ripped up half the forest already just for fun. It definitely threatens the living conditions of the centaurs who aren't happy to all be crammed in here anyway. Meanwhile, Hagrid grumpily says, "I'll have less of the 'our' forest, if it's all the same to you." Okay... Apparently, there had been some sort of treaty (at least informally) between Hagrid and the centaurs where they figured that he was free to come and go -- he was respectful enough -- but he has a lot more freedom to come and go out of the forest than the centaurs do. They have fewer rights, and then when they stop encroaching on Hagrid and Harry and Hermione and they say, "Oh, well, he's got his foals with him" -- they say, "The slaughter of foals is a terrible crime" -- that's partly the author emphasizing the moral code of centaurs. They very strictly follow their

own moral code, but it also underlines why Firenze is helping them: Voldemort revolts the centaurs. "The slaughter of foals is a terrible crime." No matter what they think correctly about wizards, they know that Voldemort is not with them. Whatever he does, that's wrong. That is not part of their belief system. Oh, man... Every time Hagrid insults the centaurs and he calls them "a bunch of mules" and "ruddy old nags," I get so nervous.

JC: It's like, "Hagrid... HAGRID, NO! NO!"

Lorrie: "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" Hermione is horrified, and then I realized the centaurs don't mind. They think it's not an insult to be compared to horses. It's not an insult at all. Why would they mind? It's humans that they don't want to be compared to. Oh, yeah... Still, Hagrid, shut up. Then he says, "Ah, you heard what they said. They wouldn't hurt foals -- I mean, kids," and I just thought I spent years at a time forgetting where the word 'kid' comes from and what it means. Oh, it's not any funnier to call a human child a 'foal' than it is to call them a 'kid', is it? Oh, yeah... Huh. He's saying, "Oh, we can't let ourselves be pushed around by that lot." Tiny little Harry and tiny little Hermione are looking at Hagrid, who can single-handedly stop a centaur mob: "Sure. Easy for you to say we can't be pushed around by them. You're enormous." It reminded me of something I saw on Facebook a couple months ago: I have an acquaintance who's Latina and Native, and another acquaintance (who's white) told her, "You don't have to be worried about ICE. You're a citizen." I just left that alone. Yeah, okay, Hagrid... Ugh, I've been monologuing about Hagrid versus the centaurs for a while. How was that for you?

JC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I hadn't thought about how the centaurs got there. I think I just always assumed that that was a herd that had been there in the forest and the boundaries got smaller and smaller, so this is all they had left. I was thinking of them in that way; I hadn't thought of them as being a population potentially of refugees from different places. That's a really interesting take.

Lorrie: Yeah. They have such a strong moral code and they don't need as many resources as giants, so they haven't taken to beating up their own like Grawp, except for Firenze. The potential for intra-group conflict is there.

JC: It's also interesting to me that this is yet another example of Hagrid overestimating the skills of people around him or underestimating the danger he's asking people to put themselves in.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This has kind of been a theme of his Magical Creatures classes all along, is these incredibly dangerous creatures, and he's like, "Oh, they're fine, they're fine."

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: This is the most extreme example of that, and the fact that he armed himself to come in the forest...

Lorrie: Right.

JC: It was a long walk in there, it's super dangerous... When they get there, Grawp is violent towards Hermione, and he expects them to come back and talk to him.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: "Oh, the centaurs probably won't kill you."

Lorrie: Yeah. Meanwhile, he's dripping blood from his nose and he's got black eyes, and it's not really inspiring confidence.

JC: Oh, my God, yeah. You're expecting Harry in Hermione and Ron to come back, and I can see Harry the entire time being, like, "Uh..." looking at each other. 'Can we not promise to do this? What can we do to make Hagrid feel better, but also not promise anything?'

Lorrie: Yikes. Yeah, and that is also a familiar feeling when you're faced with things that you know you have to do that are very clearly beyond your ability or resources. Um... Okay.

JC: I thought, though, that very interesting moment when Grawp sees Hermione and then goes after her King Kong-style...

Lorrie: Yes!

JC: Really, I had moments of 'Why? Why did the author do this? What was the point of that, to put Hermione in that kind of stereotypical danger?'

Lorrie: Yeah. She was not happy about that, although that happens to Harry all the time.

JC: It can be someone else's turn.

Lorrie: Yeah. I really appreciated what a surprise it was then... As we follow these scratched, bleeding children out of the forest to come back to school life, I had forgotten about the Quidditch match, and I really enjoyed the slow realization that the kids had about how that match turned out.

JC: Yeah. They hear the song and they don't listen to the words at first, and then they start listening and they're like, 'Wait a minute... Who's singing that? The words are different.'

Lorrie: Yeah. To see that Ron has finally gotten his wish... This must feel pretty much like what he had seen in the Mirror of Erised as a first year: he did it. We know that Ron does better when Fred and George are gone; maybe Hermione and Harry not being around also was a little bit of added luck. Look, he can do this on his own.

JC: Yeah, I don't remember when the 'Weasley Is Our King' song happened. I thought, 'I know there's a time in the books when the song gets flipped around and it's supporting Ron.'

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: I couldn't remember if it happened in this book or the next one, because we have the whole thing with... What's the potion?

Lorrie: Oh, Felix Felicis.

JC: That's it, because we have the whole thing with the Felix Felicis potion in the next book. I couldn't remember what happened in this book, so when I started realizing what they were singing, I was like, 'Okay, there's some Quidditch stuff that I'd forgotten.' Yeah.

Lorrie: Yeah, and we didn't see it happen because we're off in the forest with the others, but we just know that Ron did it by himself.

JC: And he gets carried back into the building with his head banged against the ceiling a few times, but yeah, I'm happy for Ron.

Lorrie: Yeah, and they are, too.

JC: Gryffindor won the Quidditch Cup, apparently, which is an incredible accomplishment considering everything that happened with the Gryffindor Quidditch team this year. The really good players got banned for life. Oh... With all the things that happened, I'm sure Umbridge was not happy about that one.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: But Harry and Hermione did nothing to help it along. It was all Ron, which is great.

Lorrie: It's so sweet that they decide they're not going to bring him down at this moment. They'll tell him later.

JC: For sure, yeah. Let him be happy a bit longer.

Lorrie: Yeah. It's so sweet the way he beams at them; they were the people he wanted to connect with. Again, I think 'What lesson can we take from this to help us in our current struggle?' Take the wins when you can.

JC: Ah, yeah.

Lorrie: That's what's going to make you stronger.

JC: Yeah. Enjoy moments when you can, just have fun, and celebrate something. Yeah. That's the stuff that you need to keep going.

Lorrie: That will literally, physically make you stronger. That was a very adventurous chapter. God... Not a moment's peace anywhere in this chapter. The next chapter is called O.W.L.s.

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